inadequate traffic potential and a small runway. Private operators with suitable aircraft are being encouraged to add more stations in their network including Vellore.

Purchase of MCLR aircraft Boeing 747-400

2414. PROF. RAM KAPSE : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of the proposal regarding purchase of MCLR aircraft Boeing 747-400;

(b) The reasons for not finalising the proposal;

(c) whether the aircraft will be purchased by Government; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BRTOADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) to (d) The proposal for purchase of Medium Capacity Long Range (MCLR) aircraft is at present under consideration of a Sub-committee of the Board of Air India. The aircraft under consideration are Airbus A340-300, Boeing 777-200 and MD-11.

Replacement of ageing aircraft

2415. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of ageing aircraft proposed to be replaced by Indian Airlines and Air India in 1997-98; and

(b) the action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BRTOADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) and (b) Both Air India and Indian Airlines have plans to continue renewal and expansion of its aircraft fleet during the Ninth Plan Period.

Extension of Umroi Airport

2416. SHRI ONWARD L. NONGTDU: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether government are contemplating to implement the development packages for the North-Eastern Region of India as assured by the Prime Minister during his visit to the region in 1996; and

(b) if so, by when the construction work for extension of Umroi Airport near Shillong would be started?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) yes, Sir.

(b) Umroi airport upgradation is not included in the above package. This airport near Shillong is suitable for 50 seater aircraft operations under visual meteorological conditions and it is not possible to extend the runway for operation of larger aircraft due to operational restrictions created by surrounding terrain and high hills in the approach path of the runway.

Use of small size Aeroplane to connect medium size cities and towns

2417. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to extend concessional finance for the acquisition and operation of Aeroplanes by the private sector.

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any study has since been made for the potential for use of small aircraft to connect medium size cities and towns all over the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND